



The Congressional Connector

Week of April 20 – 24, 2009

Michigan to Receive \$236 Million for Water Infrastructure

On April 14, the Environmental Protection Agency awarded \$236 million to the State of Michigan to help localities finance needed improvements to Michigan's aging drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The funds were included in the American Recovery and Investment Act approved by Congress in February.

The lion's share of the funding (\$168.5 million) will go for water quality protection projects in our communities. The State of Michigan has already identified 48 high-priority projects that are eligible to use the funding. Two of the eligible projects will help reduce pollution in Lake St. Clair. "This is an excellent use of the economic recovery funds. It will create jobs and keep millions of gallons of raw sewage from fouling the environment," said Rep. Levin. [For more information, click here.](#)

Lawmakers Sponsor Legislation to Connect People with Essential Local Services

Rep. Levin and more than 100 House lawmakers have cosponsored legislation, the Calling 2-1-1 Act [H.R. 211] that will help provide greater access to information and referral for human services and volunteer opportunities in communities across America. Especially in these difficult economic times, Americans increasingly need essential services for themselves or someone close to them – everything from finding an after-school program to securing care for an aging parent. The Federal Communications Commission has designated 2-1-1 for community information and referral services, but this service only reaches about two-thirds of the U.S. population. H.R. 211 builds on this successful initiative with the goal of ensuring that all Americans have access to community information through 2-1-1.

[For more information on the 2-1-1 program in Southeastern Michigan, click here.](#)

Tax Day Report on How Your Money is Spent

On April 15th, millions of American households filed their federal income tax returns. At the same time, many Americans are seeking more information on just how their tax dollars are spent. The nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities recently published a report entitled, Where Do Our Federal Tax Dollars Go? The report underscored that just a few program areas account for the overwhelming majority of the federal budget. For example, a full three-fifths of the federal budget goes to three key areas: national security (21%), Social Security (21%) and health care (20%). Another 11% of the budget goes to safety net programs, such as Supplemental Security Income for the elderly and disabled, while 8% of the budget goes to pay interest on the national debt. The last fifth of the budget covers everything else the federal government does, including transportation, NASA, education, and providing benefits to America's veterans. [To read the report in full, click here.](#)